



COURTESY OF PAUL GREEN FOUNDATION

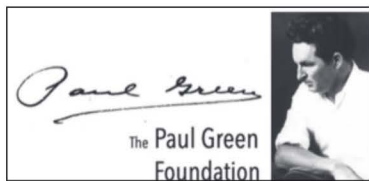
2022 PAUL GREEN PRIZE WINNER

PAUL GREEN: A PROFESSOR OF THE PRACTICE OF PLAYWRITING

BY GEORGANN EUBANKS

GEORGANN EUBANKS, a founder of the North Carolina Writers Network and a past chair of North Carolina Humanities, has taught writing in public schools, prisons, and corporate settings, and consulted for nonprofit groups across the country. Her books include *The Literary Trails of North Carolina* series, published by the University of North Carolina Press for the North Carolina Arts Council, and, most recently, *Saving the Wild South* (University of North Carolina Press, 2021).

As Executive Director of the Paul Green Foundation, Georgann did not accept the honorarium for the Paul Green Prize, which NCLR receives from the Foundation for content related to Paul Green accepted for publication in our issues. NCLR did receive the funds, which were used for the graphic design of this essay.



If someone were to map the “family tree” of North Carolina writers, connecting the lines of writer-to-writer mentorship, the many tiers of “begats” would be complex. Scores of creative writing teachers have nurtured successive generations of novelists, poets, playwrights, journalists, and producers of short stories and creative nonfiction. Paul Green, whom the *New York Times* described in his obituary as “one of the first American white playwrights to write works for black actors and to tackle such modern themes as lynching and prejudice,”¹ was among the state’s earliest and most progressive literary mentors of his time.

As might be expected, North Carolina’s “family lines” of literary creatives are clustered around public and private university creative writing programs, which were established and scaled up in the twentieth century. Degree and non-degree programs now stretch from one end of the state to the other. The friendly cultivation and harvest of successful authors in North Carolina have sometimes mystified writers from elsewhere who come to the state to promote a book or give a guest lecture. They report surprise at the literary congeniality here, especially in contrast to certain places where workshops and classes are run more like boot camps to winnow the weak.

The practice of support, encouragement, and apprenticeship among North Carolina writers began more than a century ago. Present-day students may not be as familiar with the generous ethos set by Paul Green at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Green, who won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1927, only six years after earning his bachelor’s degree from UNC, had been profoundly encouraged by instructors who saw his talent immediately. He, in turn, passed the gift along to his students and many professional colleagues over his lifetime.

ABOVE Paul Green, 1940s

¹ Herbert Mitgang, “Paul Green, Pulitzer Playwright and Drama Teacher, Dies at 87,” *New York Times* 6 May 1981: D23.